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Art Evans

No gaming mecca

Despite those speculative stories it's a safe bet that Edmonton won't become a gambling mecca.

The odds against our fair city developing as a serious rival to Las Vegas and Monte Carlo are so astronomical that they'd scare off the famous John W. "Bet-a-million" Gates. Legend has it that Gates "would bet any sum of money on anything," but if he were around today Gates wouldn't bet a thin dime on Edmonton becoming one of the world's major gambling centres.

The possibility of casinos mushrooming in these parts has been mentioned as a result of certain concessions granted during Klondike Days. However, licencing authority rests with the provincial government and I just can't see the government "lifting the lid" to permit year-round gambling operations.

To do so would invite a flood of applications from potential operators demanding "equal treatment." I might file one myself, put a roulette wheel in the basement and hang a sign on the house.

As I live in the Holyrood district an appropriate name for the establishment would be "The Holyrood Palace." That handle is just as classy as "Caesar's Palace."

In my opinion the provincial government can be expected to continue to exercise tight control over the gambling operations. To relax that control would give the government a very large administrative headache, something that all governments try to avoid if at all possible.

In any case, Alberta isn't going to become a new and profitable haven for operators of "private" gaming establishments. In many countries around the world today governments not only control gambling but are participants and reap the major share of the profits.

This is the trend as J. Philip Jones notes in his book, Gambling, Yesterday and Today.

"In the past gambling has been censured on moral or social grounds but, with the tacit approval given by increasing governmental intervention and participation, conscience could in course of time become atrophied and gambling judged solely on its merits as a means of replenishing state coffers."

Guess I won't put that roulette wheel in the basement and hang out that sign after all. Not if the government is going to get the gravy!

Fascinating history

Mr. Jones' book (published in 1973 in Great Britain by David & Charles, Newton Abbot) is a complete history of gambling and, as one might expect, is fascinating to read. He traces gambling from its earliest forms in primitive societies right up to operations in the 1970s.

The chapters I found to be the most interesting are "The meccas of gambling," and "Some famous gamblers and fantastic bets." Among the meccas singled out for special attention are Baden-Baden, Germany (which boasts Europe's oldest gambling casino) famed Monte Carlo and of course Las Vegas, "now the world's leading gambling centre." New Orleans is named as one of the oldest "gambling towns," in America, its betting "action" dating back to the early 18th century. (Incidentally, Edmonton is not listed among the world's gambling meccas.)

If you have always thought of the professional gambler as "a suave, well-dressed, devil-may care character flitting from gaming table to gaming table and encountering endless amorous adventures en route," then think again. Mr. Jones has news for you.

In fact the true professional gambler is often almost exactly the opposite. Although he is well groomed and well mannered, his life is almost monastic as no indulgence can be allowed to blur his two main assets — his intelligence and his skill. The successful gambler acquires his skill through many years of hard work and practice. If he is to remain in business he must devise ways to beat the factors of chance and improve on them.

Mr. Jones doesn't support the theory that gambling is a "natural instinct" and in fact says this theory is "no longer accepted," He writes:

"Man is not born a gambler but, from his experience in life, he acquires a fascination for the elements of chance, and seeking to emulate his elders, he attempts to exploit these factors in pursuance of reward. It would appear that gambling in the betting sense is a thread in the pattern of social evolution — a thread that has remained unbroken since the dawn of time."

With all due respect to Mr. Jones' research in this special field, I'm still not convinced that gambling isn't a "natural instinct" in man. In fact I would be willing to bet that it is. However, it would be impossible to settle a wager of that kind. Positive proof, one way or the other, is lacking. The issue is not one that a game of chance can decide.

'Native nation' call stirs North controversy

'Skirting the edges of powerful fears'

By Gordo Sinclair
Of The Journal

YELLOWKNIFE, N.W.T. — The Indians and Metis of the Northwest Territories may well have done themselves and the North irreparable damage recently with their call for a northern native "nation" within Canada.

The Dene, as they prefer to be called, delivered their message in a 600-word "declaration statement of rights." The natives plan to use this "Dene nation" concept as the basis for negotiating a land claims settlement with Ottawa. The claim amounts to almost the entire Mackenzie Valley, 450,000 square miles of oil-and gas-rich wilderness.

Seek own rules

The main point being made by the Dene has merit. They are in the majority in the Northwest Territories and want to ensure that after southern whites invade the North with major developments such as the Mackenzie Valley pipeline that the Dene will have a clear measure of control over their destiny.

They want to participate in northern development but at their own pace and under their own rules. The Dene don't want to end up like the majority of their southern brothers, victims of the white man's development.

The disconcerting aspect of the Dene declaration is not so much what was said but how the natives said it.

The manifesto is little more than trite, left-wing rhetoric when what is really needed in this time of suspicion, misunderstanding and racial tension in the North is a lucid explanation of the native position.

The Dene declaration tosses around phrases such as "colonialism and imperialism is now dead and dying." It tries to draw a parallel between the northern natives' position and that of the Third World countries where the aboriginal Africans and Asians have thrown off the oppression of foreign powers and won independence.

It's an exaggerated analogy. Technically the North is a colony and major decisions are the responsibility of Ottawa, which has control over the purse strings and natural resources.

But, particularly in light of the fact that the native people of the Northwest Territories have a clear majority in the legislature, the Indians, Metis and Eskimos collectively have control over ordinances governing such areas as education, labor and social welfare.

The territorial council also has the power to veto the budget, a lever it has never had the fortitude or unity to use.

There is a suspicion here among northern whites that the natives are being strongly influenced by left-wing advisers such as University of Toronto economics professor, Mel Watkins.

Watkins, the former New Democratic Party Waffle wing organizer, has been working for the Indian brotherhood in its Yellowknife offices for a year. He has purposely kept a low profile, avoiding on-the-record interviews with the media.

Only the RCMP, presumably, and the native leaders themselves know how significant a role Watkins and the other white consultants have played.

Melville Watkins

But one fact is known—Watkins has been able to stretch his leave from the University of Toronto to two years and he will be advising the Indian botherhood through what will probably be its most crucial 12-month period.

Most northerners understand that the native land claim in itself is not to be feared. For one thing, no one owns land in the territories outside of the communities.

As another white northerner points out: "The sooner the natives get an economic base the better it is for everyone."

What is bothering some, however, is the language the natives are beginning to adopt, particularly in their Dene declaration.

Said one long-time white resident: "They're skirting the edges of some very dangerous and powerful fears."

If there is a single word in the Dene declaration that has done the most damage, it is "nation."

As one territorial government official pointed out: "I think they're going to obscure the message they're trying to get across. The legitimate concerns will be buried in the debate over that particular word."

And that's exactly what's happened in southern Canada. "Nation" to the white man, conjures up a sovereign country. The natives are talking about staying in Canada. Their use of "nation" is in the context of a race of people, a tribe of Indians.

The Dene are falling into the same trap as Robert Stanfield with his election talk of "two nations," when referring to Quebec and the rest of Canada.

What the misunderstanding has done is offer the federal government an "out" during negotiations with the Dene. How can the natives be taken seriously when they speak of a "nation" and the whites they are dealing with interpret it as meaning a sovereign country?

That misunderstanding may also have lost for the Dene, support among some liberal-minded southerners who have supported them to this juncture.

Many whites here have worried out loud about the native organizations claiming 450,000 square miles of the Mackenzie Valley when everyone, including the native leaders, realizes it's an unrealistic request.

The natives, it should be remembered, are asking for ownership of the land. They don't want a cash-land settlement such as James Bay has been offered and the Alaskan natives have received.

Third of Canada

Ottawa has a barren-land grizzly bear by the tail, with the Dene and their aspirations in the Mackenzie Valley. And the federal government is likely to have a polar bear by the snout in the Eastern Arctic where the Eskimos are organizing their land claim.

The Eskimos or Inuit as they prefer to be called, are claiming the rest of the Northwest Territories. Together the Dene and Inuit are demanding a third of Canada. And the Inuit have also been talking about an Eskimo state within a state.

Ewan Cotterill, the 36-year-old assistant commissioner of the Northwest Territories, is among the most articulate and outspoken liberal thinkers in the North. He sums up the situation this way:

"The Northwest Territories, over the next 10 years, is not going to be a place for a person who is looking for peace and quiet. We're in a difficult period of growth and I think, in terms of the races, it's going to call for patience and understanding on both sides."

Even if the 450,000-square-mile claim is clearly a bargaining position, white northerners are worried that the gap between the native peoples' expectations and the political realities is such that when a lesser settlement is finally reached the frustration could lead to open hostility. Now, with the undefined Dene nation concept, some whites believe that gap has become even wider.

The federal government is not without blame in this predicament. It should have set out ground rules for land claims' negotiations long ago and made its position clearly and loudly.

The case for NATO intervention in Portugal

Harry Midgley

It would be perfectly proper and entirely practicable for the NATO allies to intervene in Portugal to oust authoritarianism and install democracy.

When last year, after more than four decades of fascism, the Portuguese military staged a revolt, there was genuine rejoicing among democrats everywhere. For it seemed that the military men were sympathetic to opening up a more hopeful new era for the Portuguese people.

For more than 40 years, under Salazar and his successors, the country had been held in the grip of an oppression, which tolerated great extremes of poverty and of wealth, and which denied the mass of the people access to better education and improved living standards.

Because the old regime characteristically also set its face against change in the Portugese African colonies Portugal had long been bogged down in virtual war with the various independence movements there. Thus the regime's intransigence worked its own downfall. For the hostilities constituted a serious chronic drain on Portugal's economy and a serious chronic cause of tension and strain in Portugal's domestic political life. And it was to stop the running sore of colonial involvement that the soldiers staged their coup.

As a sort of bonus, the soldiers in the early days of the new regime seemed to want to lead the country toward a system that would give the Portuguese people more political freedom and more social justice than in the past.

It was reported that some of the U.S. leaders were making noises about the desirability of intervening in order to prevent Portugal from falling into Communist control. It would have been quite wrong for the NATO countries to do any such thing at that time. Though Portugal had been strategically valuable to NATO, her undemocratic and repressive regime had been an embarrassment to the democratic world and had morally weakened the claim of NATO to be the protector of freedom.

How often, the U.S. and her allies had tried to prop up reactionary regimes whose authoritarianism and illiberalism were incompatible with the true spirit of freedom. It would have been a dismal repetition of such mistakes, to have rushed to restore reaction and to crush a hopeful revolt in Portugal.

Besides, it could have been argued that in the past the Portuguese had seemed almost constitutionally incapable of embracing democracy. And one might have said, "If the Portuguese have shown no disposition to seek freedom for themselves, why should anybody force freedom upon them?"

However, two things have happened to alter the situation significantly. Firstly, free elections were held for the first time in decades, and in them the Portuguese people unmistakably, by a large majority, expressed their preference for the Socialist Party and the Popular Democratic Party, and thus declared in favor of conventional democracy based on freedom of expression and freedom of political parties. Secondly, the soldiers, after some dithering, showed that — supported by the Communists, who fared badly in the free elections — they would crush democracy and replace the old right-wing authoritarianism with a new left-wing authoritarianism.

So the NATO countries could now quite properly intervene, on two counts.

Firstly, they could rightly say that the Portuguese people having, massively by their free votes, declared their desire for democracy — the democratic powers were intervening to prevent the wishes of the sovereign Portuguese people from being frustrated by tyrants. It would make a refreshing change to have the Western powers aiding an emergent democracy instead of acting to bolster a reactionary regime whose only attraction was its military value.

Secondly, they could say that they were intervening to prevent Portugal, which is vital to Western security, from falling into the hands of a regime basically unacceptable to the West.

The latter is not a very nice attitude. But it is merely being frank about the principles that underlie — and always have underlain — international politics. The main reality, in this context, is that countries, and alliances, act when their vital interests are threatened.

Vital to security

The Soviet Union has never made any bones about the fact that it will not stand by and allow one of the Eastern European states it regards as vital to its security to fall into the control of a regime unacceptable to the Soviet Union. If the Soviet Union could intervene, on this principle, to install authoritarianism in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, why should not NATO intervene, on the same principle, to install democracy in Portugal?

It could hardly be said that such action would be out of harmony with the Helsinki accord which is just about to be signed between the West and the East. For that accord largely acknowledges this very realism — that the Soviet Union will not tolerate regimes unacceptable to itself in the countries it deems vital to its defence.

What is sauce for the Soviet goose is sauce for the democratic gander.

Besides, the delightful thing about it is that the Soviet Union would really be able to do nothing about such an intervention by the NATO powers. Geography and the facts of strategy are all on the side of NATO, where Portugal is concerned. And with the goodwill of the mass of the Portuguese people, and with the strategic and geographic, and general military factors, all so much in NATO's favor, intervention would be almost certain to be swiftly successful, unlike the prospects for projects that have sometimes been mooted for intervention by the West elsewhere.

In many countries, even in the NATO sphere as well as in the Soviet and Chinese spheres, people have been applauding the fact that, in the Portuguese colonies, the use of force has been bringing about the ending of Portuguese colonialism, and has been winning freedom from Portugal for the people of the African territories. Why should such people not applaud if the use — or the threat of the use — of force by NATO should win freedom for Portugal and for the people of Portugal herself?

It would not be the first time in her history that Portugal had been liberated by friends from beyond her own borders.

Most NATO stand by and watch democracy being murdered and the security of the West being thereby endangered.

If NATO cannot prevent a tiny minority of tyrants from forcing authoritarianism on a friendly and important ally whose people have massively voted for democracy, then of what value is NATO anyway?

Breaking the UN rules

A conference abandoned, a policy without shape

Richard Gwyn
Special to The Journal

The Fifth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention will not be held in Toronto, explained External Affairs Minister Allan MacEachen, because of "the inevitable intrusion of unrelated political considerations into the proceedings of the congress."

MacEachen, who originally wanted to continue with the congress but who was outvoted in cabinet, meant of course Middle East politics. The "unrelated political considerations" that mattered were the Ontario election and the search for Jewish votes. For shabby domestic reasons, Canada has committed one of its most shabby international acts.

To give MacEachen his due, he presented his case with some skill. He dodged the central issue of the presence at the Toronto meeting of representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization and so avoided, partially, a confrontation that could wreck the UN "Habitat" conference that Canada hosts next year, and also the Olympic Games.

The real point is that recognition of the PLO has become the acid test of relations between the Third World and the West, between rich and poor, between north and south.

For lack of any idea where we stand, Canada has been firm where we should have been soft, as in the present case, and soft when we should have been firm, on almost every other occasion.

It is as easy to argue for as against the PLO. It espouses, and commits, not just terrorism but atrocities. It certainly is not a government, and so has no international standing. Yet it does represent the Palestinians. And they are a nation, a people without a country as the Jews once were.

Also, though the concept is unpleasant to have to accept, terrorism while horrible does have an historical context. The Jewish Stern gang for example.

Many of the world's most notable leaders once were terrorists: Mao Tse-tung, Fidel Castro, Tito, Jomo Kenyatta, and the late Ho Chi Min. Guerrillas are terrorism; established governments can afford to use bombs and missiles.

To these contradictions there are no easy answers. Once it seemed as if Canada might provide at least the beginnings of an answer. Last November, in an important but little-noticed speech to the UN, MacEachen called the PLO "an entity." Deliberately he avoided loaded words like "nation" or "state."

An entity deserves recognition in a way that every ragged band of terrorists, or freedom-fighters — history, as written by the winners, decides which they are — do not. Canada, he said, "accepted the possibility" that recognition of the PLO was a precondition to a Middle East settlement.

This approach was both subtle and imaginative. For it to lead anywhere, and for Canada to play any useful brokerage role, we had to abide strictly by the UN rules and be strictly fair to both sides. Instead, we have fallen onto our back to be nice. Or onto our face, whenever anyone asked us.

• Last year, the Afro-Arab bloc broke the rules by pushing through a resolution to cut Israel off from any funds from the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Correctly, we opposed the resolution.

It passed. Correctly, the U.S. and France and Switzerland responded by cutting back their payments to UNESCO. We did nothing.

• Two days after MacEachen's November speech, the UN voted on a motion to condemn Israel for the deliberate destruction, confirmed by an independent UN team, of the Syrian town of Kuneitra before handing it back under the terms of ceasefire.

Four negative votes were cast. Linked, in improbable company, were Israel of course, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Canada.

• Our votes on UN resolutions dealing with different aspects of observer status for the PLO box the compass in almost perfect symmetry: five "yeses", five abstentions; four contentious decisions in which no votes were cast, and one "no," on the key resolution last fall to grant permanent observer status to the PLO.

The decision to postpone the Toronto conference extends our sorry performance into the future.

We have broken one of the most basic of UN rules — the UN itself and not the host country, a clause that goes the rounds, decides who should attend conferences. Or if they should be denied, except for self explanatory financial or administrative reasons.

To criticize the UN those days is easy, and is fashionable. But as members of a club we have no choice but to accept its rules. Or to quit.

This is the crunch point. The 40-member Afro-Arab bloc voted last week to expel Israel from the UN. If Asian and Communist countries support the resolution it will pass at the fall General Assembly.

The U.S. already has made its attitude plain. The Afro-Arab tactics, warned Secretary of State Kissinger, will reduce the UN "to an empty shell."

U.S. Ambassador to the UN Daniel Moynihan has said that if Israel is evicted, "the kind of role could range from a cut-off of funds to non-participation in UN affairs."

Canada's attitude isn't plain. Because we have none. Canada would "resist" any attempt to expel Israel, said MacEachen. But goes without saying. The point is that MacEachen has said nothing else.

Instead of a policy we have an empty shell, its shape determined from one day to the other by the need to be nice. The need not to offend, and the need to win votes.

"I've also done a projection into the next century if anyone's interested."

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